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MY PET SUBJECT

By ARTHUR HOEBER

First paper, with original illustrations by various artists.

It is not alone the artist to whom certain subjects appeal with irresistible force, though, through the medium of his canvas, the fact is perhaps more accentuated in his case, than with the average person. Ordinarily the fads, the hobbies of the individual, are known only to his few intimates. With the painter, the display of his work in the exhibitions, year after year, where he who runs may read, discloses to the world in no uncertain way, and in a manner unmistakable, the bent of his thoughts, the tendencies of his mind, the affiliations that most attract him. He carries his heart on his sleeve, so to

say, that daws may peck at it.

Nor is it surprising that he should find certain phases of nature more appealing than others; that certain stages of life or environment should impress him; that in all the world about him, this or that condition of humanity should be more to him than another. The layman to whom the horse is the most interesting and absorbing of all topics, is no unfamiliar phenomenon; and who is there that does not number among his acquaintances some one enthusiast to

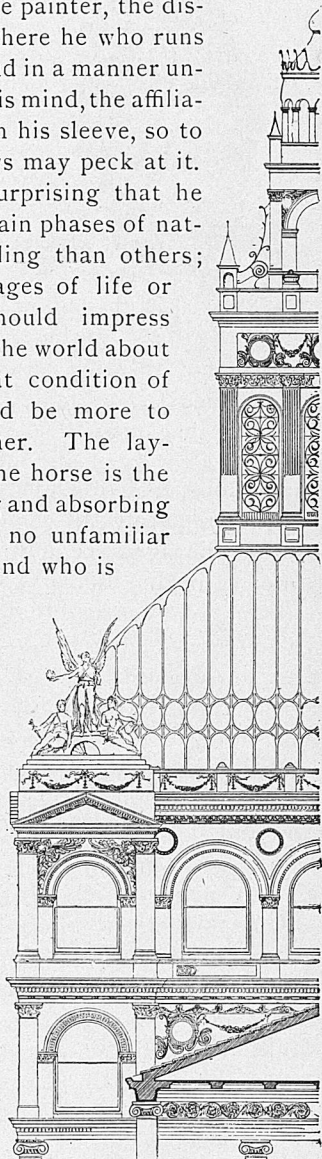


Drawn by Ella F. Pell

AN IDEAL

whom the dog is the most important of all the dumb brutes? Have not we all in our childhood gone through successive stages of admiration for white mice, pigeons, goats and a varied assortment of dumb creatures, each in its turn filling us with deep satisfaction and absorbing interest? Are there not persons to whom the postage-stamp is an affair of the deepest importance? Is the collector a *rara avis*, and as for the man who would walk for hours under a broiling sun, to capture a new specimen of insect or bird, have we never known him?

To depart from the question of preference, there enters another factor, sordid possibly, practical certainly. The artist having given expression upon can-



Drawn by S. Gifford Slocum

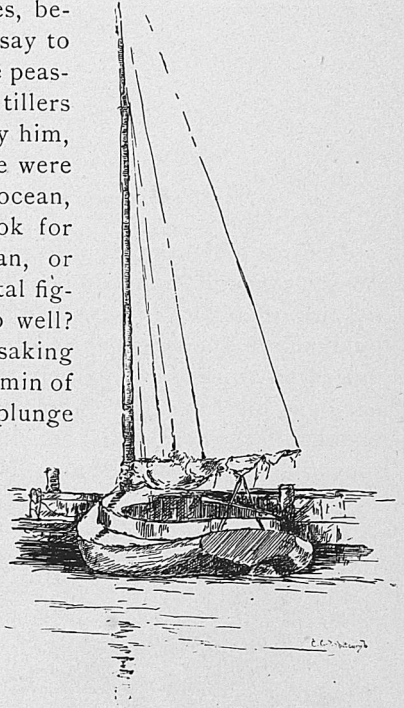
HALF-ELEVATION OF TOWER

vas for many years to certain sympathetic themes, becomes more or less identified therewith. We say to ourselves: How charmingly Jules Breton does the peasant-life of France; what poetry he puts into the tillers of the soil. Would we care to own a picture by him, of a fashionable crowd on the boulevard? If we were buying a Gérôme, would we seek some study of ocean, with rocks and sand, or would we not rather look for the familiar eastern subject, with its Mussulman, or

slave, or other oriental figure that he treats so well? If J. G. Brown, forsaking his bootblack, his gamin of the streets, were to plunge defiantly into sunsets and twilights, and upset all the traditions of our youth, should we care to put the result in our collections as representative work? There are, to be sure, those who have the courage of their



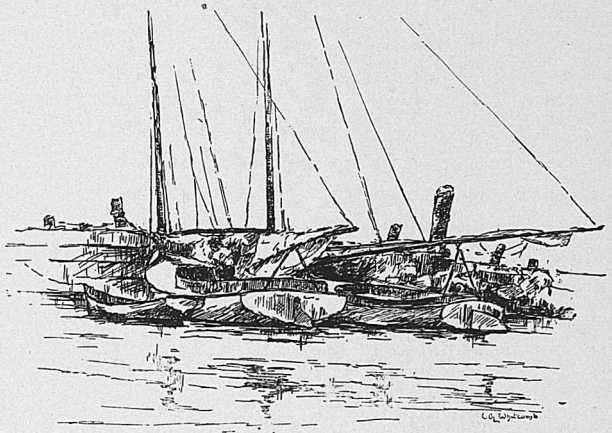
Drawn by J. Campbell Phillips
A PICKANINNY



Drawn by C. G. Whitcomb
A CATEOAT

convictions, and to whom the primrose is a delicate, suggestive thing of beauty; who, appreciating the good in everything, judge with much discrimination and without the signature, and who need no hallmark to guarantee the brand. They are, however, in the minority, and they may not be counted upon to any great extent.

Some one has said that a whole lifetime barely suffices to do one thing well. Surely in art, the true workman never ceases to be a student, and only the most serious, constant application and study enables the painter to arrive somewhere near perfection. Familiarity does not always breed contempt, intimacy often broadens knowledge; close contact discloses possibilities; and daily, hourly association must, of necessity, bring out latent forces unperceived before.



Mr. Stone Pier, Falmouth.
Drawn by C. G. Whitcomb
THE STONE PIER, FALMOUTH



Drawn by J. A. Knickerbocker

A NOVEMBER DAY

To enjoy thoroughly pictures of child-life is to appreciate the keen observation, the close study, that enables the painter to faithfully give the subtle touches of character, the thousand nothings that make the completed total, undefinable but necessary, and that present, give distinction, but absent, leave the canvas commonplace, empty, meaningless. To paint children well, is to know them intimately, to find them sympathetic, to enter into their thoughts. Possibly no subject presents more difficulties, technical as well as physical, than the portrayal of children. No one but the painter can ever realize their near approach to perpetual motion; few can understand their variety of expression; the ever-changing sea

presents no more diversity than do their little faces. One must be *en rapport* with them to overcome the problem ; one must apprehend it by intuition, rather than by anything else, and only thus can the result be successful.

Perhaps as one looks at " Bashful," by Maria Brooks, remembering these difficulties, his appreciation of it will be the greater, there will be more kindness in his glance. And so toward Otto Wolff, with his pudgy, dimpled little tots, caught on the jump as it were, we may express a fuller commendation.

While it is eminently proper that a woman should be attracted by the charm of children, or that a man should find the horse or the cow a congenial subject, it does not follow that environment or fitness dictates the choice. The fragile delicate girl is not unfrequently drawn unconsciously to the barn-yard, the kennel, or the paddock, while the burly heavily built man is found by the cradle, or in the dainty boudoir, choosing a delicate subject of baby-life and budding innocence. Appropriateness does not always enter into the gifts the gods send.

So it is that from Florence Mackubin we have the great big St. Bernard dog, with his noble old head and fine honest eyes. Elizabeth Strong, too, has a predilection for dogs, though this time it is kittens that have caught her fancy, in " Five-o'clock

Tea in my Studio."

The quiet charm of sunset, the peaceful stretches of level meadow, the soft shadowy corner of woodland, these attract the landscapists. Delicacy of distance, with harmonies of blue and purple, the grays of the early morning with opalescent qualities of tender color and slender trees gracefully outlined against soft



Drawn by Otto Wolff

BATHING THE LITTLE ONES



Drawn by Olive P. Black

THE TROUT POOL

skies, all fascinate the painter. P. E. Rudell has not escaped their blandishments. We see here, a characteristic bit by him of his favorite corner, a little way back, perhaps, from Long Island Sound, where he loves to paint afar from the highways and in the quiet of the country. Here he seeks his inspiration and finds, let us hope, the poetry and the sentiment of nature.

So, too, we may realize that the tangled foreground, the perplexing luxuriance of weed and grass, of twig and bush, with a distant hill or mountain, now obscured by mist, now lit by sunshine, are all bits of nature's handiwork, that speak eloquently to W. L. Sonntag, and to Olive P. Black. Infinite variety has nature to offer. There is no excuse for monotony, no necessity for repetition. The trees by J. A. Knickerbocker are different in their way, through each must render them as he is impressed.

There seems so much in the race long under bondage, with its originality of manner, of costume, and of mode of life, that the wonder is that more of our painters do not find themselves attracted. T. W. Wood, the venerable president of the Academy of Design, and E. L. Henry, have done much to make the negro popular. J. Campbell Phillips finds him a worthy subject for his pen, and the woolly head, the thick lips, and other peculiar traits are here with much fidelity.

Time out of mind the sea has had an irresistible fascination for men, whether as a means of life, or of sport, or as furnishing the inspiration for glowing canvas. Its terrors make it only the more alluring, its joys compensate for all hardships, and its devotees are faithful even unto death. Can there be any more exquisite pleasure to the painter, on a soft summer day, with easel and canvas up, with salty, invigorating air all about him, and lovely effect of sky and water to fill the eye, than to sit before it all, and work with keen enjoyment; to feel the exhilaration of



Drawn by Elizabeth Strong

FIVE-O'CLOCK TEA IN MY STUDIO



Painted by Maria Brooks

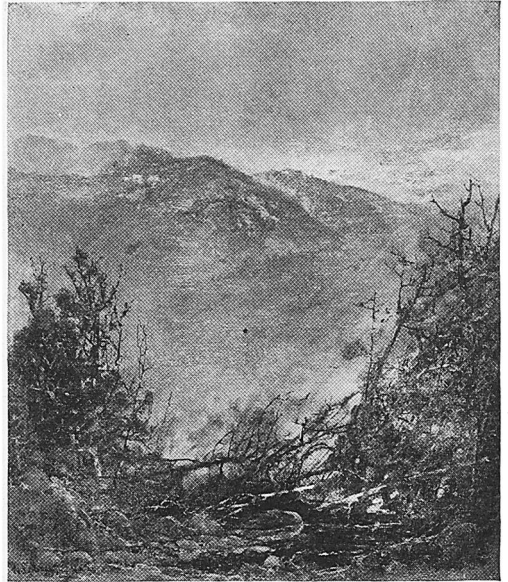
BASHFUL

Owned by W. T. Evans

health and life and the freedom of the open air. Camilla G. Whitcomb is thus attracted, and her boats show how well she knows their construction, their rig and every rope and sail; and to her, Jack, ashore or afloat, is a man and a brother, of more than passing interest, —one who, like the Ghost in Hamlet, “could a tale unfold.”

From lovely maidens in soft, clinging garments, in fashionable attire, in peasant frocks, in all the mystery of feminine toilet of high life and low, to saints with medieval gowns, uplifted eyes, and soft, sweet faces, the transition is easy. Stanley Middleton has found his preference in the beauty of womanhood, in the charm of graceful female face and form. St. Cecilia is delicate, attractive and full of sentiment.

When it comes to the ideal, how vast a field is opened. Ella F. Pell shows us her ideal, and somehow it seems



Painted by W. L. Sonntag

A GORGE IN THE ALLEGHANIES



Painted by P. E. Rudell

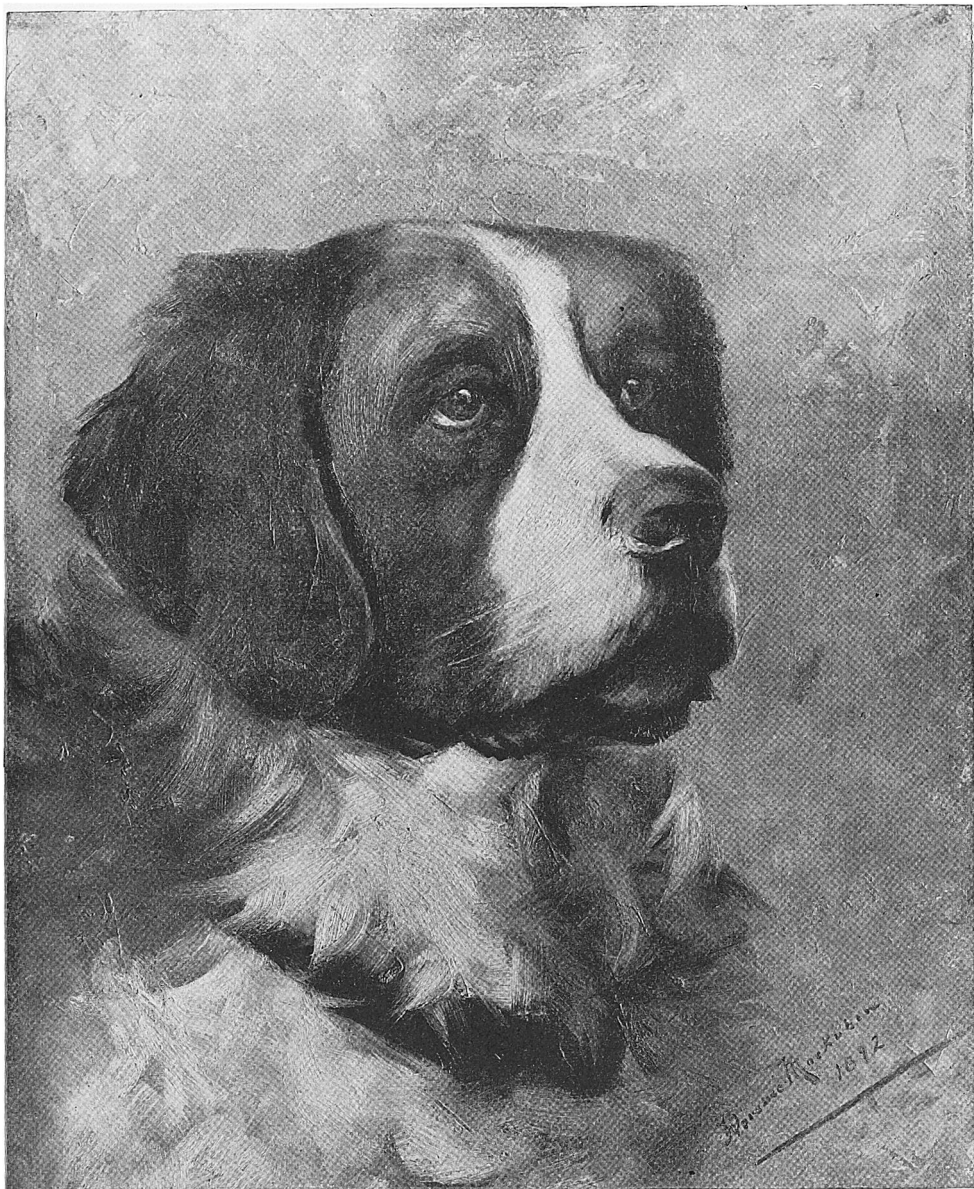
A MISTY DAY



Painted by Stanley Middleton

ST. CECILIA

wind-tossed, with its swirling lines of hair and background intermingled, the more so perhaps, by its proximity to the architectural solidity of the tower, by S. Gifford Slocum. It is an interesting question as to how far one may venture into the ideal, and where the ideal ceases and the real begins. After all, our ideals must be based upon the tangible, upon the recollection, the suggestion of some reality that has at one time or another impressed us. Who, for example, can evolve a new arrangement of humanity that can be more attractive than that we have at some period seen in the life. We may combine the beauties of many different



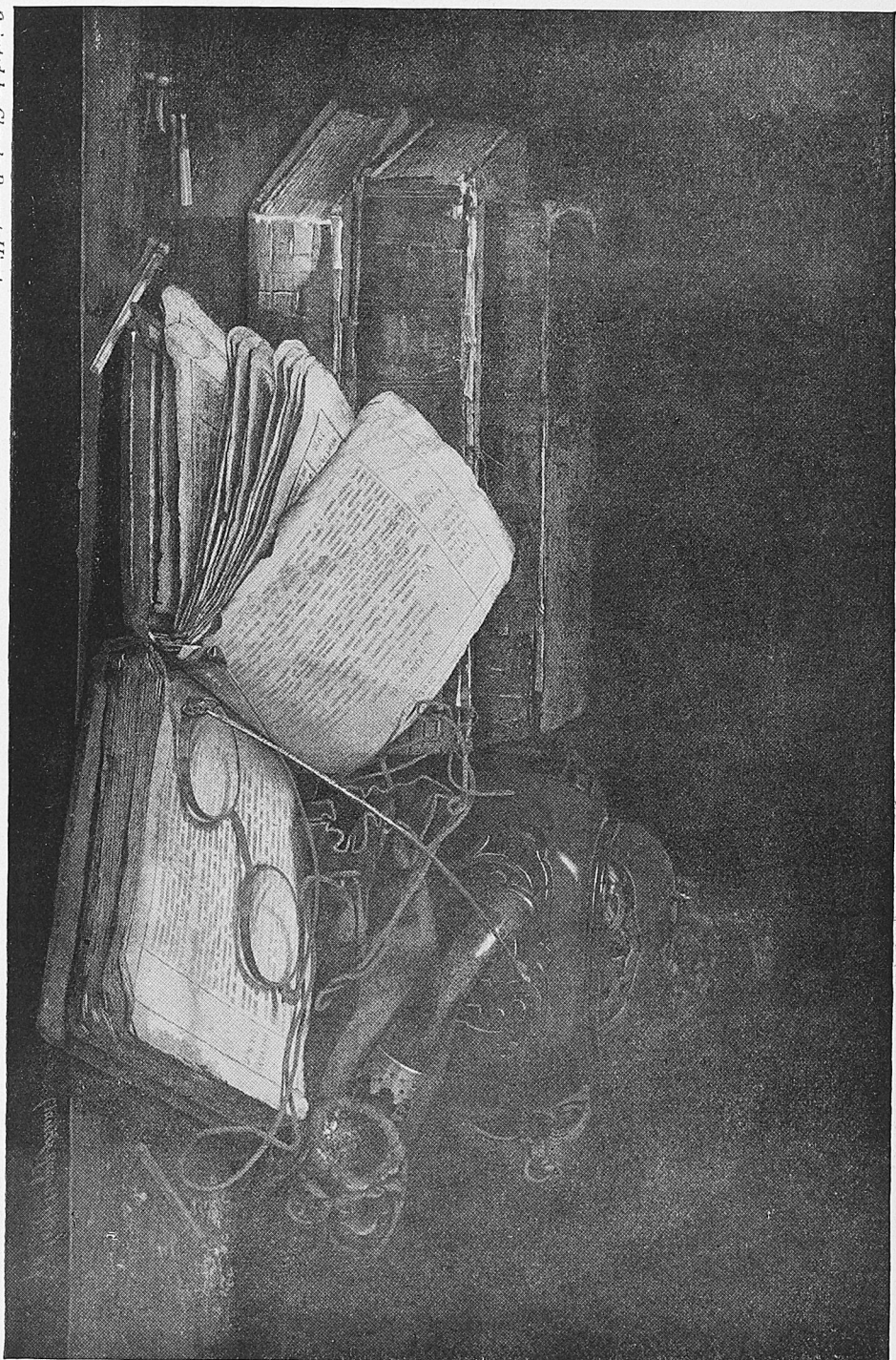
Painted by Florence Mackubin

HEAD OF A ST. BERNARD DOG

faces, and obtain a nearly perfect result, until there comes along a bit of nature's handiwork by no means flawless, if measured by the standards of beauty, and yet the healthful glow, the lovely color, the piquancy of expression, the animation of life—all these combined—produce a result that makes the sculptured marble or the painted canvas seem vain and unworthy.

So it goes. Each painter for generations, time out of mind, has had predilections toward this or that subject; and eventually he has found it, and his best follows.

To be continued)



Painted by Claude Reginald Hirst

A CORNER OF GRANDPA'S STUDY